

1: Holmberg--83 [6]
116, 527, 884

(1941-42) 1950

Siriono

"While ceremonial life is almost negligible among the Siriono, membership in full adulthood is signified by participation in a bloodletting ceremony and drinking feast which is called hidai-idákwa. This is about the only ceremony performed by the Siriono. It was never held while I was living with them, but the marks on the arms of adult men and women were visible evidence that it is occasionally performed. "

"Hidai-idákwa, or arm piercing, is never carried out until one is adult and has had children. As Eantádu told me, 'When a woman has had a child and a man is father of a child, they are ready for hidai-idákwa.' The principal reason for holding the ceremony is to get rid of old blood—to rejuvenate one. Eantádu said, 'The blood is heavy; it must be "thrown away".' Hidai-idákwa also performs the magical function of increasing the supply of food. "

"Under strictly aboriginal conditions the Ceremony is apparently held once a year, when the trees are flowering and there is an abundance of honey. Men and women collect large quantities of honey, and mead is brewed. While the mead is maturing, people participating in the ceremony have their hair cut, and are decorated with feathers and painted with uruku.

The ceremony begins with a drinking feast. The men hold one; the women another. Children are tended by those too young to take part or by those not participating in the ceremony for other reasons. Singing and dancing are a prominent part of the festival. When the participants reach a drunken stage, they pierce each other in the arms with a dorsal spine of the sting ray, and the blood is let into small holes in the ground. Men usually perform the operation both on themselves [84] and on the women. Each person is punctured about a half dozen times, the men on the lower arms from the wrist to the elbow and the women on the upper arms from the elbow to the shoulder. On the morning following bloodletting, the men depart for the hunt at the break of day, the women following (with baskets of ashes which they spread along the trail) to gather palm cabbage. They return from the forest about noon, and drinking begins again. By the end of the second day the supply of mead has usually been exhausted, and the celebration ends.

A general feast is not held during the ceremony, but people eat at their own fires. Old pots must be thrown away, and cooking is done in new ones. According to informants, the participants are not allowed to eat the following foods for about 3 days after bloodletting: guan, coati, anteater, jaguar, deer, squirrel, otter, monkey, tortoise, fox,

1: Holmberg--83-84
116, 527, 884

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armadillo, paca, porcupine, agouti, and palm cabbage. If they violate these food taboos, it is believed that the wounds caused by bloodletting will become infected. Consequently, the game hunted by the participants is distributed to members of the extended family not taking part in the rites. According to Eôko, the diet of the ceremonial party is limited to peccary, tapir, fish, and vegetable foods (except palm cabbage)."

1: Holmberg--84
116, 561, 884

(1941-42) 1950

Siriono

"No one is obligated to undergo hidai-idákwa, but the scars left on the arms by blood-letting are always pointed to with pride. Every child aspires to such a series of tribal marks, for they are visible evidence of maturity."

1: Holmberg--84 [2]
116, 789, 825, 884

(1941-42) 1950

Siriono

"Besides being a rejuvenation ceremony and a mark of adulthood, hidai-idákwa is also believed to insure the supply of food. Kénda told me that during the ceremony the animals all come near the house to see the men gaily attired with feathers and uruku, and to hear them sing. Therefore, when the men go out to hunt after hidai-idákwa, they always encounter game."